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ROUND THE BESOM BUOY.

WHERE I got my turn for mechanics and that inventive faculty, I cannot guess. Assuredly, not from my mother, who thought it the whole duty of man to be unexceptionable in his accoutrements, and to whom my grimy hands and slovenly apparel were a source of constant wonder and dismay. Certainly, not from my father, the respected justices' clerk of the ancient port and town of Tharborough. I never shall forget his face when I told him I had made up my mind to be a mechanic.

'What, sir!' he cried; 'wear a fustian jacket and corduroy breeches; be rung to your work with a big bell; and have your dinner brought you in a basin, tied up in a cotton handkerchief; when you have the chance of being articleed to me, and inheriting my practice! Go, sir! You are unworthy of the name of Pogmore!'

My ruling passion, however, was too strong to be denied. I wouldn't work at the law, and I would work at my own contrivances. In the rear of our old-fashioned premises in the High Street of Tharborough, there was a big unused storehouse where I had my workshop. Here was a forge and a lathe, and here I chiselled, and filed, and sand-papered, and hammered all day long. I had great ideas in those days, and was determined to revolutionise all existing modes of locomotion. One of my early inventions was a universal ship-carriage, adapted equally for land or water. It was in form something between a canoe and a four-wheeled car. On trial, it was found a dead failure, and was abandoned in the mud of the river in which it perversely sunk.

For a long time after this accident I had no heart to prosecute my mechanical labours; my forge went cold, my lathe was abandoned to rust and neglect, my workshop was closed and locked.

Still my ideas ran strongly upon the means of increasing the power of man over the elements, and I determined to devise a contrivance that should put drowning out of the question, that should form a warm weather-proof covering, and at the same

time enable its possessor to take to the water at pleasure. I was not long in constructing a costume in which a man could float almost as well as without any costume at all. But it was not a complete success. It was difficult to move in it either one way or the other; and when, with a view to ascertain the effect of artificial power, I persuaded the master of one of our river-steamers to take me in tow for a sail up the Thare, I found that I had unwittingly converted myself into a gigantic kind of spinning-tackle. Round and round I went spinning at the end of the tow-rope, the water foaming in my wake as I darted along, sometimes right on the top of the waves, sometimes a foot or two beneath them. Fortunately, there are no sharks or alligators in our river to be attracted by such a bait; but I was within an ace of being drowned, when the master of the tug, perceiving my dangerous condition, stopped his way, and hauled me aboard.

This accident, however, shewed me what was needed. A keel was required. Nature had not provided me with one, therefore it was necessary to make one for myself.

I will not try the patience of my readers with the details of the methods I employed to obviate this defect in my apparatus. I tried a cork keel in the first instance; but this had the effect of making me float the wrong way. I must have weight, I found, in my keel, and the extra weight entailed extra power of flotation—air-vessels, and so on. In the end, I triumphed over my difficulties: my swimming-armour was a success. I went up the Yeere with the tide one day as far as Bigborough Castle, and came home with the ebb with the very smallest exertion; and I walked back from the quay to my father's house in the High Street in triumph, wearing my new swimming-dress. Certainly I attracted considerable attention. Business was suspended for a while; and nearly two thousand of the inhabitants of Tharborough accompanied me home, completely blocking the High Street, and putting a stop to the traffic.

In my own home, I did not obtain much sympathy with my success. But the members of our

club—the Yeere and Thare Yacht Club—congratulated me warmly on my achievement; and christened my apparatus the Iktheandron.

Although our Yacht Club had originally been composed of the owners of river-craft, and had been carried on in a very humble way, the club-meeting having been held in a room over Slack's shop the tobacconist, it had grown and expanded into a regular nautical club, having sea-going craft on its books, and holding an annual regatta in the roads in front of the town. Shortly after my successful trial trip with the Iktheandron, this regatta was to come off. Out of compliment to my father, who subscribed handsomely to its funds, I was elected a committee-man. I very well remember the meeting we had before the regatta, to settle the programme for the day's entertainment. Harmer was our chairman; and after we had arranged all the usual races, including a duck-hunt and tub-race for the amusement of the mob, Courthope, a tall, thin, sardonic-looking youth, who was always accompanied by a big black Newfoundland dog, suggested in a sneering manner: 'Why don't Pogmore come out with his diving-machine?'

'If you mean the Iktheandron,' I said with dignity, 'it isn't a diving-machine—it's a swimming apparatus.'

'Spinning, did you say?' queried Courthope. That was an allusion to my former *fiasco* on the Yeere which annoyed me deeply.

'I don't mean spinning,' I said with heightened colour, 'but swimming; and I'll make a bet of ten pounds with any man present that I'll take my apparatus as far as the Besom Buoy and back again; and the match shall come off on the regatta day, if you like.'

'Done with you!' said Courthope, taking out a note-book to score up the bet.

'You'll have a boat to follow you, of course,' said Harmer.

'Oh, let him have a boat,' sneered Courthope; 'he'll want picking up before he's got a hundred yards.'

'I'll have no boat following me,' I said: 'the Iktheandron is safer than any boat. You'll take my word that I round the buoy?'

'Of course I'll take your word, Pogmore,' said Courthope, and there the discussion ceased. But when the bills of the regatta came out, they displayed this announcement at the bottom: 'The Iktheandron, a wonderful monster, neither fish nor man, will exhibit itself on the beach, and swim round the Besom Buoy.'

I had one or two preliminary trials on the sea in the dead of night, when nobody was about to watch me, and I found that my contrivances answered tolerably well. With a light paddle, I propelled myself canoe-fashion through the water, at the rate of four or five miles an hour. With the wind astern, I rigged up my pocket-handkerchief as a lug-sail, using my paddle as a mast, fixing it in a kind of rest on my shoulder. I couldn't sail very close to the wind, as you may imagine, I made too

much leeway for that; but, on the whole, I was well satisfied with my performances, and felt sure, if the weather were fairly good, of winning my ten pounds from Courthope, as well as earning for myself no little fame. I had only one danger to dread—lest anything should pierce my inflated india-rubber floats; in that case, I should certainly go to the bottom like lead, owing to the dead-weight of my false keels. But there was little chance of such a catastrophe. There were no sword-fish to pierce my armour; and unless one ran aground, which was not possible in the voyage I had to make, it was difficult to see how any accident could happen to the Iktheandron.

The day of our regatta was a most propitious one. The sea was calm, and yet there was a pleasant breeze. The town was crowded with excursionists, and the beach was thronged like a fair. Nobody, however, took much notice of the regatta. Guns fired, smacks and yawls sailed hither and thither, and went out of sight altogether by-and-by, while people forgot all about them. Long galleys raced some sixteen times across the course from buoy to buoy, but as one boat always led by two or three lengths, the excitement of the finish was not intense. It was quite a different matter, however, when the time arrived for the appearance of the Iktheandron. I had arranged to doff my apparel, to assume my armour in the club dressing-room; and felt a little nervous, I confess, as I took a peep from behind the blind, and saw the immense concourse of people who had collected between the door of the hotel and the beach. There was no going back now, however. Quickly and carefully, I put on my various paraphernalia; and having satisfied myself that all my arrangements were perfect, I took a final glance at myself in the long swing-glass. My appearance was not prepossessing, I am obliged to admit. Imagine a huge turtle standing on its hind-legs and carrying a paddle between his forward flippers; imagine something between the diving-man at the Polytechnic and an Esquimaux in full winter costume, and you will have some idea of my outward semblance. I well remember the excited roar that burst from the crowd as the Iktheandron appeared on the steps of the hotel for a moment and then plunged into the sea of heads.

I am afloat! I have waded gracefully through the surf, and now I have thrown myself upon my back, and am paddling rapidly out to sea, with my head to the waves. The cheers and shouts of the spectators are growing faint in the distance. I am alone upon the world of waters. I have carefully conned my course. I must keep the spire of St Peter's church and the windmill in a line, whilst I close up the monument and the look-out on the Trinity wharf. Then when these two are together, and the Screwby light-ship opens out from the spit of sand, I shall be at the Besom Buoy, or thereabouts. A feeling of joyful exhilaration possessed me. The waves were dancing in the sunshine; the sky was of a deep cerulean blue, flecked with white fleecy

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clouds, like flocks of sheep straying upon the heavenly pastures. I was full of a delicious sense of freedom and power. I had timed my voyage with care; the last of the ebb was carrying me gently towards the 'Besom;' the first of the flood would float me quietly back again. I contented myself with an occasional stroke of the paddle, to keep my course; and the wind veering a point or two in my favour, I presently hoisted my sail, and skimmed joyously along.

As I cast my eyes towards the shore, I felt a certain inconvenience from the dazzling reflection of the sun in the water, as I could not make out two of the landing-marks—the monument and the look-out. But I had still the spire and windmill to guide me, and I should presently catch sight of the buoy itself. All of a sudden, from out of the glare of the sun's rays, I saw a glittering ripple glide forth quickly, advancing towards me. In the centre of the ripple was a black speck, that as it came nearer and nearer, assumed the appearance of a dog's head. A dog it was, sure enough; he was overhauling me rapidly, and presently I could hear his deep regular breathing as he clove his way through the waters.

At this moment the sail began to flap, the breeze died away to nothing, and I was left becalmed upon the sea. I struck my mast, and set to work to paddle with all my might, hoping to leave my unwelcome companion behind me. A few minutes' hard work convinced me that I had no chance in a trial of speed. I had better reserve my strength till it should be needed. As the dog approached, I saw that it was long Courthope's big Newfoundland; a dog that had a passion for pulling people out of the sea. He was evidently bent upon seizing me, and putting a stop to my voyage; his sharp teeth would penetrate my air-tight skin, the Iktheandron would collapse, and I should sink to the bottom like a stone.

The dog was close upon me now; he made directly for my shoulder, and rose half out of the water in his eagerness to clutch me; but a dexterous stroke of my paddle backed me out of his reach, and he missed his first spring. He quickly circled round, however, and attacked me on the other side; again I shot forward, and eluded him. The dog now seemed to appreciate my manoeuvre. Instead of approaching me sideways, he began to swim in the line of my longest axis; and as he swam faster than I could paddle, and was ready to follow any lateral deviation I could make, I foresaw that another moment would bring him upon me. Indeed, I already heard his hoarse breath close to my ear, and I aimed a wild blow with my paddle in the direction of the sound. The dog eluded the blow, and seized the end of the paddle in his mouth. The effort overcame my equilibrium; I was obliged to let go the paddle, and rolled over and over, but righted at last, and, to my joy, I saw that the dog was swimming off with the paddle. He would take it to the shore, no doubt, and although I should be embarrassed by its loss, I could steer myself pretty well by my hands. But I was speedily undeceived as to the dog's intentions. Having swum with the paddle in his mouth to a considerable distance, far out of my reach, he abandoned it, and once more swam back to renew his attack upon me. Of the combat that ensued, only the sea-gulls were the

witness; they screamed over our heads, anticipating, perhaps, a handsome feed upon the combatants; the contest soon came to an end; it was impossible to elude the vigilance and perseverance of Neptune. In a few moments, I felt that his sharp fangs had closed upon my india-rubber skin, I heard the whistle of escaping air, I felt a great gurgling and rush of water, but somehow I didn't sink; breakers went right over me, sweeping me from stem to stern, but I didn't go down; in another moment I felt that I was high and dry upon shore, the big dog pulling and dragging me out of the reach of the waves. And there he stood over me, wagging his handsome tail, and lifting his noble crest, looking as pleased and as proud as if he had done me the greatest service in the world. But for myself, I shuddered and cried aloud when I saw where I was—for we had drifted on to the Besom sands.

It is a peculiarity of these sands, which are visible only from half-ebb to the following half-flood, that whilst during the rest of the ebb they are firm and dry, and afford an excellent footing; no sooner does the flood-tide begin to make, than the sands assume the consistency of puddle. Woe betide the unfortunate craft that gets ashore on these treacherous sands, which are neither land nor water, sea nor shore, where there is no footing and no swimming, where boats cannot live, and where the stoutest ship and bravest crew are inevitably irredeemably lost, sucked in by the viscid devouring pulp! On this slough of despair had I drifted during my contest with the dog; the sands were yet firm and dry, but the ebb had almost run out. In a few minutes, the flood would begin to make, the sand to quiver and turn to jelly.

There was only one thing to be done: to divest myself of the Iktheandron, and strike out in the costume of Adam for the shore. It was hardly possible that my strength would hold out, for I was not a strong swimmer, but that was the only chance. One of the equipments of the Iktheandron was a long sharp knife, kept in a waterproof sheath. With this I quickly cut the laces and fastenings of my armour, and in a few moments stood upon the sands, in the apparel in which I was born, ready to strike out for my life.

Neptune all this time had been watching me narrowly. He shewed unmistakably that he meant to follow me into the sea. Then I made up my mind that I would kill him. It seemed almost like murder to kill that brave intelligent dog, but I knew he would drown me if I didn't despatch him. I held my knife behind me in my right hand whilst I called the dog to me, speaking to him in a kind encouraging way. But he saw something in my eye that put him on his guard, and he would not come near me. The sand was already beginning to tremble under my feet. I felt a violent throe of fear and despair, that paralysed all my powers. The dog danced about me barking and howling, half in anger and half in sport. There in the distance gleamed the long low horizon, the white houses on the esplanade glittering in the sunshine, the sails of the windmills, the tall look-out stations shewing above them, white sails shewing afar off, the roar of the crowd like a faint whisper, the crack of the rifles in the travelling shooting-gallery, distinctly to be heard; everything full of life, and I doomed to die. I should be missed presently, and they would send a boat after me, but it would be too late. That black brute that was dancing about

me seemed to my excited nerves a veritable evil demon charged with my destruction.

A hoarse scream over my head, followed in a few seconds by a deep hollow roar; a flock of sea-birds fly screaming from the water, a great jet of foam and spray springs up into the air, another and another beyond. The artillery are firing from the battery on the north shore at a mark somewhere in the sea, and the shot has just struck the water and ricocheted away into the distance.

The sound aroused me from my apathy of despair. I followed the course of the shot with my eyes, and I discerned the object they were aiming at, a large barrel, moored a couple of hundred yards away from the sands, surmounted by a red flag. Suddenly I determined that I would strike out for their buoy. I could reach it easily enough from the sand-bank. I ran the risk of being struck by a shot; but, on the other hand, half-a-dozen glasses were no doubt watching the buoy from the battery, and if I could once reach it, and wave the red flag, there would be no doubt that I should be seen, and rescued. But there was the horrible dog; well, perhaps for a hundred yards, I could swim as fast as he. Without a second thought, I rushed through the breakers, and struck vigorously out for the buoy. I heard the excited bark of the dog as he followed me into the sea, but I fancy that he lost sight of me for a moment in the surf; at all events, I got a good start of him, and reached the floating barrel before he could overtake me. I had just put my hand upon it, my face turned towards the shore, when a white light flashed in my eyes, and I heard the scream of an approaching shot, different in sound from the last, not so loud or vehement, but with a puff, puff, puff, something like the roar of an express train. The dog was upon me now, and trying to clamber on my shoulders. I heard a loud roar over my head, a whistle and whirl of innumerable iron fragments, the sea round about was churned into a caldron of foam: a shell had burst over my head, and I hardly knew if I were alive or dead. But when the noise and tumult ceased, I looked around and found myself unhurt; and my enemy had disappeared. His black body was to be seen rolling over in the waves, a track of blood crimsoning their sides; he had been hit, and I had been spared.

How I supported myself on the buoy and signalled frantically with the red flag; how a boat put out from under the fort, and picked me up, and how I was sent home in a fly, wrapped up in a soldier's great-coat, and what my father said and my mother said, I haven't time to relate. Courthope was very savage about his dog, and indeed I felt sorry myself for the poor animal, whose only fault was excess of zeal. I was disposed at first to accuse Courthope of having sent the dog after me, but he completely vindicated himself from the suspicion. The dog must have kept his eyes upon me from the moment I quitted the club-room, and have followed me into the water unseen.

A fishing-smack picked up the remains of the Iktheandron, much battered* by the waves, and brought it to my father's office, claiming salvage upon it. He sent them off in a great rage; upon which the boatmen proceeded to exhibit it on the beach as the skin of a wonderful sea-monster, at a charge of a penny a head; and I believe they made a good deal of money out of it.

For myself, the perils of my experimental voyage

effectually discouraged me from any attempts to resuscitate the Iktheandron. I have taken my place at last in my father's office; and I fear that I shall have no more adventures to record, even if you were disposed to listen to them.

THE EXILES OF ALSACE.

A YOUNG gentleman of Scottish parentage, Mr G. S. Stevenson, born in Geneva, and with strong French proclivities, has in a spirit of generosity written a small volume as 'a free-will offering' on behalf of those numerous and very unhappy exiles from Alsace and Lorraine, who preferred to emigrate and endure poverty rather than accept the option of remaining subjects of the German Empire.* The book is well meant; and when touching on the woes experienced by the great body of exiles on leaving their old homes, 1st October 1872, the writer is genial and pathetic. While properly abstaining from political controversy, he obviously gives the weight of his sympathy to the French, and does not conceal his belief that the Germans have done not only a grievous wrong, but committed what will eventually prove to be a serious blunder. Perhaps so. It would have been more judicious, however, in our author to have gone a little deeper into history than the pages of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, before he pronounced an absolute opinion on the subject. He seems scarcely to be aware that the exiles so mourned over are for the most part of German origin, being descendants of persons who for generations bitterly denounced their absorption by the French. As scarcely any historical fact has been more mystified than this, we shall endeavour to clear it up, for the sake of the Metzgers, Alsacers, Lorrainers, and other unfortunate transferees—not doubting that what we have to say will somehow or other reach them.

We begin by calling to mind that for several centuries, the French, high and low, but statesmen in particular, have fondly cherished the notion, that the natural and proper boundary of France on the north-east is the Rhine from its mouth to its sources. It is vain to deny this fact; so ingrafted is it in the national sentiment as to have become an article of education. We may agree with the French that the Rhine would, undoubtedly, be a well-defined boundary, rounding things very nicely off in that quarter. But then comes in the sobering reflection, that a nation, any more than an individual, cannot always get what it likes. A country must just put up with what frontier the events of history have assigned, and in calm submission make the best of it. Circumstances of old date—as old as the partition of Charlemagne's empire—had fixed the boundary of the country we now call France, considerably back from the Rhine, and there the matter should have rested, but it did not.

Fretting under the notion that the Rhine should be the frontier, and not particular as to the means

* *Alsace and Lorraine, Past, Present, and Future. Sold for the Benefit of the Emigrants of Alsace and Lorraine.* Hardwicke, London.

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for securing the intermediate strip of territory, the French, about three hundred and twenty years ago, began as a bold stroke of policy to take possession of Metz, and the territory connected with it. The incident is as curious as it is discreditable. A mean advantage was taken of the war which broke out between the Emperor Charles V. and his Protestant subjects in North Germany. Although, at the time, the Protestants of France were persecuted to the death, the French king, Henry II. (son of François Premier), with furtively ambitious designs, offered to defend the Protestants of Germany against their own emperor; and entered into an alliance, in 1551, with Maurice of Saxony and other princes, undertaking to send an army to their aid. As bases of operations, it was agreed that he might take temporary military possession of Toul, Verdun, and Metz, three bishoprics each with a portion of territory lying within the duchy of Lorraine, but held as distinct fiefs of the German Empire—such, in fact, being fragments of Lothair's kingdom, which fell to Germany, and had in no shape been incorporated with France. It was stipulated that, in occupying these places, the French were not to interfere with their old connection with the Empire.

What followed this confidence might form the subject of a romance. The French grievously, and, to speak plainly, in a most shameful manner, abused the trust put in them. All the stipulations went for nothing. In 1552, French troops took possession of Toul and Verdun, also of Nancy, the capital of Lorraine, treating the duchy, generally, as a conquered country. Seeing this sort of treatment, Metz shut her gates, and trusted to her fortifications. To procure an entrance and secure possession, there was a resort to stratagems, which afford a startling illustration of the tricks that French nobles at that time could be guilty of, in order to gain their ends. The French commander, the Constable Montmorency, begged to be allowed to pass through the town with a few attendants, while his army made a wide circuit on its route. The too credulous custodians of the city opened the gates, and, to their dismay, the whole French forces rushed in, and began to rule in true despotic fashion. Montmorency, finding himself opposed by a patriotic party among the magistrates, got the better of them by an act of almost unexampled treachery. Affecting to be very ill, he took to his bed, was dying, and invited those magistrates who were obnoxious to him to come to be witnesses of his will. Deceived by these false representations, they unfortunately attended the summons. When they presented themselves in a spirit of condolence at the bed-side of Montmorency, he suddenly sprang upon the senior magistrate, and stabbed him with a dagger to the heart, while the guard despatched the rest.

Thus was Metz secured for France in a way which modern Frenchmen, we should imagine, could hardly think of without shame, if made properly aware of the facts, which they usually are not. If any of them read this, it will probably be the first time they have heard of the transaction. Although Montmorency had secured Metz by a piece of downright brigandage, that important fortress was not submissively relinquished by Germany. Furious at its loss, the Emperor Charles V. proceeded to besiege it with a large army. The defence was undertaken by the Duke of Guise,

assisted by a body of French nobility. After an investment of four months, and a loss of thirty thousand men, Charles was forced to raise the siege, January 1, 1553, all his attempts at the capture of the place being effectually baffled. The seizure of the city and bishopric of Metz, as now briefly described, together with Toul and Verdun, was the first act of a series of aggressions made by France upon Germany, with the object of extending her frontier to the much-coveted Rhine.

The next haul which the French made on the left bank of the river was about a hundred years later, and was justifiable only on the principle of might making right. It took place in this wise. In the course of 1648, the Thirty Years' War in Germany terminated by the mutual exhaustion of the parties more immediately concerned—Roman Catholics and Protestants. After the sufferings which had been inflicted, both were disposed for peace, which was secured by the treaty of Westphalia, 24th October 1648. In their professed zeal to help the Protestant states of Germany, the French had been allowed to obtain a temporary military occupation of the stretch of country from Strasburg to Coblenz. Now that the war was over, they refused to withdraw, unless Alsace was ceded as an indemnity for the expenses to which they had been put. The German emperor, with impaired powers, could do nothing but protest; and at last it was agreed that France should have a large part of that rich territory. The important free city of Strasburg, and a number of counties and abbeys holding directly from the emperor, were specially excepted; but with Metz, which had been secured by the stratagem of Montmorency, and the large section of Alsace now resigned to them, the French established such a footing on the left bank of the Rhine as to facilitate further acquisitions.

The opportunity for a fresh acquisition occurred at the close of the wars of Louis XIV. in Germany and Flanders. While a congress proposed by that monarch was sitting at Frankfort for the settlement of disputes between France and the German Empire, a body of French troops in Alsace, in the middle of the night, 28th to 29th September 1681, stole from a neighbouring wood, and occupied the approaches to Strasburg, and soon an army of forty thousand men surrounded the city. There were no means of defence; and under the threat of being immediately stormed and pillaged, the citizens were obliged to open their gates. Strasburg was captured. This virtually decided the fate of the country. The French acquisitions were sanctioned by the Peace of Ryswick, 1697, and Alsace was henceforth a French province, with the exception of a small part at its southern extremity, which was taken from Germany at the Revolution.

We thus see that Alsace, now recovered by Germany, had not been so much as two hundred years in possession of the French. The more aged of the exiles may have talked with old men who had begun life as Germans. As regards Lorraine, it is little more than a hundred years since it was incorporated with France. It has sometimes been erroneously stated that it came to Louis XV. as the reversionary dowry of his wife, Maria Leszcynski, daughter of Stanislaus, Duke of Lorraine, who held it as a fief of Germany. Lorraine was in reality a piece of territory extorted by France from

Germany at the adjustment of terms of peace, when concluding the war in reference to Poland. It was to be merged in France on the death of Stanislaus. That event occurred in 1766, since which time only the Lorrainers have been under French rule.

There, in simple phrase, is the whole story, which is little else than a history of robberies; the wrench back which has recently taken place, reminding us that even nationalities are not exempt from the visitation of an avenging Nemesis. It may be quite true, that the inhabitants had become so accustomed to consider themselves French, that their compulsory subjection to Germany, by the treaty of Frankfurt, was deemed a cruelty too great to be borne. Their ancestors, in being made Frenchmen, felt precisely the same grievance. Long did the Metzgers and other communities of the territories torn from the empire by France, utter the most doleful complaints of the way they had been cheated out of their German nationality—all such complaints being of course unavailing. As an instance of the treatment they received: An appeal of the leading citizens of Metz, addressed to the imperial council at Spire, was seized by Marshall Vieilleville, governor of Metz; two of those most actively concerned in the movement were drowned, and the others compelled to beg for mercy on their knees. Frenchmen of the present day, of course, have no knowledge of such facts. They should, nevertheless, bear in mind that the recent bouleversement is only another turning of the tables, which may in a generation or two be forgotten. Prince Bismarck is not thought to be much given to irony. Some remarks he lately made in the German parliament partook of this character. In reply to several deputies from Alsace and Lorraine who complained of being forcibly incorporated with Germany, he dryly advised them to be quite at their ease, for in two hundred years the people of these districts of country would, no doubt, be delighted with the change that had taken place in their condition!

Hard case! as our young author suggests, to be subject to such a wholesale and sudden ruin of cherished feelings and habits, to the many thousands who 'were placed in the alternative to quit their interests, their business, their fields, the graves of their fathers, the homes inherited from childhood, and in which they hoped to die, or to lose the name of Frenchmen—to renounce their country and their flag. Who can tell us what bitter tears it cost to this unoffending and hitherto happy population, the necessity of making such sacrifices, and coming to a great decision.' Hard case, truly; and how many hard cases of the same sort, during the last hundred years, have occurred in Continental Europe from Finland to the shores of the Mediterranean. In 1860, Savoy and Nice were ceded to France, abstracting so much territory from Italy, the inhabitants being offered the same kind of option that was graciously presented in the case of Alsace and Lorraine. Who has ever made any moan for this high-handed proceeding? Doubtless, there is something peculiarly hard in Alsace and Lorraine being taken possession of in self-defence by Germany, but such is the fortune of an unprovoked war, which leaves France minus the provinces which in former ages it appropriated to serve its own ambitious purposes. Mr Stevenson speaks of this lost land becoming through sheer

discontent what Venice was to Austria—a regular thorn in the side of Germany. Who can tell how this may be? In the circumstances, we may pity France, but unquestionably the nation, in a most heedless and wrongful manner, brought the loss of territory on itself.

W. C.

HISSING.

HISSING, according to Milton, had the very worst of beginnings. It was first heard in Pandemonium. When Satan returned to his compeers in guilt after his victory over our first parents, and related his terrible achievement:

Awhile he stood, expecting
Their universal shout and high applause
To fill his ear; when, contrary, he hears
On all sides, from innumerable tongues,
A dismal universal hiss, the sound
Of public scorn.

An assembly of churchmen ought, no doubt, to be the exact reverse of an assembly of demons. That there is, however, some expectation of a certain amount of hissing in ecclesiastical gatherings may be inferred from the precautionary charge with which Archbishop Trench opened the Dublin Church Congress in 1868. 'Hissing,' remarked that scholarly prelate, 'is not a human utterance: it is objectionable, because it not only expresses dissent from the speech, but dislike to the speaker.' He begged the members of the Congress to say 'No, no!' with all the fervour they could command, and not to hiss, whenever they felt compelled to give an audible expression to their dissent. The poet who attributes the first hiss to the devils, has said that 'new presbyter is but old priest writ large.' During the sitting of the Scottish Free Church Assembly in June 1873, some of the members indulged themselves so freely in hissing the speeches of those with whom they disagreed, that Dr Duff, the Moderator, told them they reminded him of Milton's hissing devils. The parallel was not exact, for Milton's devils were compelled to hiss against their will, while those gentlemen hissed, no doubt, out of hearty free will.

There has been some controversy as to the most ancient method of manifesting disapproval in public assemblies. Distinction must, however, be made between organised state assemblies and assemblies fortuitously gathered, such as mobs or theatre audiences. In the former, hissing has undoubtedly always been considered as more or less of a disorder; it has never been recognised as the dignified or legitimate way of shewing disagreement. Cicero often alludes to hissing (*sibilus*) as the form of salutation with which the Roman populace greeted those whom they disliked in the places of public concourse; they poured it forth equally upon the politicians and the entertainers who had lost their favour. Caelius, in one of his letters to Cicero, included amongst the Epistles of the latter, after speaking of the hissing of the vulgar, goes on to say that it is remarkable that Hortensius reached his great age without once incurring the shame of being hissed; or as it stands literally in the Latin: 'Hortensius arrived at old age untouched by a hiss.' Cicero asserts that the actor was hissed off (*excibitatur*) by the keenly critical

populace if he pronounced a verse one syllable too long or too short. Our English actors have an easy and indulgent audience in the galleries of our theatres; but if the English language is ever taught to English children of the poorer classes in the national schools (as German is taught amongst the dialect-speaking German races), the 'gods' will perhaps become more intolerant. It seems, from a passage in Tacitus, that mercenary hisses could be hired for the purpose of theatrical disapproval by a playwright envious at a rival's success, or galled at his own failures. Unpopular characters seem to have been hissed wherever they shewed themselves. Cicero demands tauntingly of one of his antagonists: 'Why dost thou not shew thyself to the people at the games? Fearest thou to be hissed?' The miser in Horace's Satires consoles himself, that although the people hiss him out of doors, he applauds himself at home.

Hissing comes so easily to the natural man when he wants to express dissent, that it must certainly have tried to legitimatise itself again and again in state assemblies; but it has been decided that groaning and coughing accord better with the dignity of such meetings. Formal divisions were not taken in the primitive periods of deliberative assemblies: the mind of the majority was discovered by simpler and quicker processes. Our Teutonic ancestors, according to Tacitus in his *Germania*, expressed their affirmative vote by the brandishing of their spears or rattling of their weapons: this, he says, was their most complimentary form of assent and approbation. They voted their 'Nay' by uttering a growling noise; 'if sentiments displeased them, they rejected them with murmurs.' The *strepitus*, whatever it be, was certainly in a lower and less insolent and irritating tone than the hiss. Strabo tells us there was an officer (a moderator) in the old Gaulish assemblies whose business it was to put down all interruption: at the third summons he cut off a piece of the offender's tartan with his sword. We do not know that we may accuse James I. of bringing hissing along with his other followers from Scotland into England, but it was certainly attempted in his first English Parliament in 1604. Mr Hext 'moved against hissing, to the interruption and hindrance of the speech of any man in the House, taking occasion from an abuse of that kind offered on Sunday before: a thing, he said, derogating from the dignity, not becoming the gravity, and abusing the honour and privilege of the House.' In Thomas Burton's diary of the Cromwellian parliaments there are complaints of 'humming'; but it is not said whether the hum was directed against the speakers, or whether it was merely irritating small-talk in an undertone carried on by those who were determined not to listen.

The theatre is of course the classical and historical home of hissing. I imagine that any one with sufficient acquaintance with the details of dramatic history and biography might compile a big book on Hissing in the Theatre. It has domesticated itself there; in other places it has only lodged: if it is to be finally dislodged from other places, it will still, I suppose, assert a prescriptive title to be heard there. Theatre-hissing is not only noticed by the great dramatists of all periods of our literature, but I find it brought in to point a moral by one of our great English preachers, who has most absurdly and uncritically been taken for a

Puritan, Thomas Adams. In a sermon published in 1614, under the title *The Sinner's Passing Bell*, he says: 'The player that misacts an inferior and unnoted part, carries it away without censure; but if he shall play some emperor or part of observation unworthily, the spectators are ready to hiss him off.' Plays, however, are hissed as well as players, and the French have an untranslatable adjective which they apply to both. Hissing began in the theatres, say the French Encyclopédistes, as soon as there were bad poets and bad actors impudent enough and ignorant enough to expose themselves to the criticism of a great assembled world. The French call such actors and the works of such poets *sifflable* (hiss-able); they speak of a 'comédie sifflable,' an 'acteur sifflable.' I have only heard of one attempt to dislodge hissing from its home in the theatre, or rather to regulate its hour; readers who are better acquainted with theatrical history may possibly know of others. In December 1819, the police of Copenhagen issued the following curious ordinance: 'After this present notice, the public shall not testify their dissatisfaction at the conclusion of a piece at the theatre until ten minutes after the fall of the curtain. At the expiration of these ten minutes, a signal will be given by three beats on a great drum, and all those who after that shall hiss, or give any other mark of disapprobation, will be arrested as disturbers of the public peace.' A French newspaper of the same year (from which this *ordonnance* is translated) says that it was infringed the very first night it was in force, and that arrests were made accordingly. The fact that hissing is reckoned legitimate at the theatres, has led men to choose them as the places for expressing their public dislikes in times of great excitement. Shakspeare's Cardinal Wolsey was hissed at the time of the papal aggression, but the hiss was not meant for the actor, but for Cardinal Wiseman. Hisses are directed at unpopular persons who come as spectators, and not as actors. Sir William Knighton says that George IV. always entered the theatre with an excessive dread of being saluted with this mark of public disapprobation. If he heard one single hiss, although it were immediately drowned in general and tumultuous applause, he went home wretched, and would lie awake all night thinking of that one ugly note, and not of the thousand agreeable notes. Sometimes it has not been one visitor, but a whole party of visitors who have had the hisses of the spectators directed upon them. In one of the periodical 'essays,' poor imitations of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, which appeared in such numbers throughout the eighteenth century (the *Prater*, 1756, re-published as a book in 1757), we are told that the conduct of ladies in the theatres was often so unbecoming, that the audience hissed them into silence. It seems that they talked and laughed so loudly as to render the actors inaudible.

I imagine that a chapter might be made upon the repartees of the victims of hissing. To say that the hissed have often given back as good as they got, would be to say that they merely shewed fight; but the fact is that they have very frequently, like Orator Hunt, won an unmistakable victory. On one occasion there were only seven persons in the theatre at Weimar; the seven, however, considered themselves to form a sufficient court of criticism, and taking offence at the bad

acting of one performer, they hissed him energetically; the manager thereupon brought his whole company upon the stage, and out-hissed the visitors. Mr H. C. Robinson tells us that he was present at Covent Garden Theatre with Charles and Mary Lamb in December 1806, when Lamb's *Mr H*— was performed for the first time. The absurdity of the piece turns upon the hero being ashamed of his name, which is only revealed at the end as 'Hogsflesh.' 'The prologue was very well received,' says Mr Robinson, 'indeed, it could not fail, being one of the very best in our language. But on the disclosure of the name, the squeamishness of the vulgar taste in the pit shewed itself by hisses; and I recollect that Lamb joined, and was probably the loudest hisser in the house.' Rossini, at the first performance of his famous *Il Barbiere di Sevilgia*, took the very opposite course; when every one was hissing, he turned round and energetically applauded. He felt certain of the triumphant future of the opera, and from his earliest youth was unmoved by the first judgment of the general public.

BELGIAN HUSBANDRY.

THE possibility of making a decent living for a family out of a farm depends in large degree on soil and climate. A small farm of a few acres in England, and more especially in Scotland, means semi-starvation. We have seen several instances in which the thing has been tried, and lamentably failed. A case occurred not long since within our personal observation, in which a land proprietor, by way of experiment, let a piece of ground, extending to about eight acres, with a house upon it, for a merely nominal rent. The land was good, though a little rough, and the tenant set stoutly to work upon it. In two years, he gave it up as hopeless. Another person made the attempt, and he also, in the same length of time, begged to be released of his lease, which was taken off his hands. The experiment was then very properly given up, and the land absorbed into a larger holding.

It is quite a different matter trying to farm on a small scale in the Bay of Naples, or in Belgium. There the farming is in reality a kind of gardening. Soil and climate, as well as old engrafted habits, conspire to make it practicable for a man, wife, and children to extort a living from a mere patch of ground. It is a pity that theorists who talk confidently about land distribution do not, from any personal knowledge, tell us how it is to be satisfactorily accomplished. We say distinctly that the cultivation of lands in Great Britain will not prove advantageous unless on a considerable scale, with professional knowledge, and capital to hire labourers, to buy and keep horses, to purchase artificial manures, and lie out of returns in the ordinary course of business.

As regards that garden of northern Europe, the more fertile part of Belgium, the appearance of things there is certainly very fascinating—the neat whitewashed dwelling and outhouses, the trim miniature fields, the orchards in blossom, the industrious and simple habits of the people, the

spires of village churches peeping out among the trees, all give one notions of the golden age, 'when every rood of ground maintained its man.' The very fertility, however, which produces this result is for the most part not natural. It is the effect of centuries of diligent application with the spade or plough, constant drugging with manure, and tact in changing the crops. But there is more than this. It is a result of intensely economical habits, of which we can hardly say there is any parallel in England.

Without enumerating all the plants to which the Belgian farmer gives his care, the colza, poppy, hop, flax, hemp, chicory, wheat, rye, buckwheat, and haricot beans may be named; and as root-crops or forage, turnips, beetroot, cabbages, peas, vetches, oats, and the common and scarlet clover. This variety gives to the country a very pleasing aspect; there are no large fields lying bare, as with us, waiting for the wheat, but they rather appear like a garden, where are large beds of flowers of every hue. In early spring, the scarlet clover alternates with the bright yellow colza, then the beautiful blue flax; the little white stars of the buckwheat contrast with the gaudy purple poppy, and the large tobacco-leaves, whose intense green recalls the vegetation of the tropics. Without these plants, the owner never could pay either for the manure he puts in or his high rent, as wheat grows very poorly. They require much labour, and the soil has no repose; the labourer is always digging with the spade, turning over the soil, hoeing, weeding, or harvesting.

English and Scotch farmers might take a lesson from the Belgian agriculturists in their prodigious care of manure—no wasteful exhalation, no neglect of the liquids which enrich the soil. We might almost say that the Belgian farmer is a reverential worshipper of manure. It is his idol, his treasury. In the first place, there is the manure produced in the cattle-sheds. No cow is allowed to go about in the open air. All stay within doors, and liquids which we too often see running to waste, are carefully conducted into covered tanks. Neither is the solid part allowed to be in the open air; it is covered from sun and rain, which destroy the ammoniacal salts, and trodden by three or four young cattle during the winter. In addition, the farmer collects from his ditches and streams aquatic plants, which he mixes with the manure, or uses them at once to hasten the growth of the potato. He sends to a distance for the mud dredged from canals, and lime; in the nearest town he buys the refuse from tanneries and manufactories, animal black, cinders, street-sweepings, crushed bones, and the refuse of flax and colza. His younger children are out at dawn with a little cart, gathering up from the roads and fields all that, according to agricultural chemistry, can restore to the land what has been drawn from it. Peru sends its guano; and the farmer is seen in spring, sack in hand, sowing the precious powder on the barren portions of his land; and the flinty soil swallows it all with such promptitude, that it must be manured twice or three times a year. In no country is such high-farming carried on, and it would be ruinous without

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the rich return of these plants, and the accessory crops which are gathered after the principal ones.

In Eastern Flanders, of a hundred acres of land, seventy-two are sown with cereals and plants used in manufactures; twenty-eight with roots and forage; but to this must be added thirty-one acres of after-crop, which gives sixty-nine as affording excellent food for cattle, superior to common meadows, and which explains how poor land can pay a rent of five pounds an acre. The second sowing consists of turnips and spergula after colza, flax, and early potatoes; and the carrot, which is sown in spring with the preceding crops, and carefully hoed after they have been taken away. The clovers having occupied the ground during winter, leave it clear for the April sowing; and the giant cabbage develops during the cold season, making a stem six feet high, and giving abundant and excellent leaves for milch cows. Culture thus pushed to the extreme, necessarily requires some capital, and it is reckoned that, through a system of rigorous parsimony and saving, double the sum per acre is used in Belgium to that employed in England, and two-thirds more in the best farms. In this way the most dense population in Europe can subsist on a soil so little favoured by nature.

Here it will be observed that the small farmers of Belgium, with their ten to fifty acres, place their reliance on a variety of crops, such as we could not profitably introduce into England. We might say the same thing of small farming in Lombardy. There the land bears three crops at once—mulberry trees, grown for the sake of their leaves as food for silkworms; wheat beneath the trees; and vines in the hollows of the ridges. In the south of France we see the same diversity; in some places olive trees, for the oil they produce, taking the place of the mulberry. In such parts, the country is like a garden; and with little winter, there is something growing all the year round.

Turning to one of the most fertile parts of Belgium, all, as has been said, is charming—every road is bordered with trees; not a rise in the ground is seen; all is calm, uniform, and presents an image of quiet comfort and peace. Each house is detached, and surrounded with large apple-orchards, hedged in by box, holly, or hawthorn, where the cows are brought to feed every morning and evening. It is of one story only, and thatched, containing four rooms; the first for meals, the second for the dairy and preparing the food for cattle, the others for sleeping-rooms. The old-fashioned oak furniture is a model of brightness; tin and copper utensils shine on the walls, which are whitewashed. The garden is gay with wallflowers, dahlias, and hydrangeas, and the florists' flowers which are to be shewn at Ghent.

Outside, everything is in its place; nothing spoils the greensward; the ditch and manure-heap are banished; the latter is always under the roof of the stable or cow-shed. In this stand five or six large cows, the constant care of the farmer's wife, who gives them abundance of green meat in summer, with straw, hay, and a kind of warm soup, mixed with carrots, turnips, or rye, in winter. Thanks to this nourishment, and the constant rest they enjoy, the animals give from fifteen to twenty-five quarts of milk daily. The tools are simple, but of first-rate construction; the plough is light, drawn by one horse, and works with ease, rapidity, and regularity. The harrows are of various kinds, triangu-

lar, rectangular, or a parallelogram; but the special tool with which the Fleming has fertilised sands, dried up marshes, and forced back the sea, is the spade. The proverb on the banks of the Scheldt is: 'The spade is a gold mine to the peasant;' and different kinds are made for light or heavy soil.

The fields are mostly square, and rarely contain more than an acre; the ground is curved symmetrically, the centre being the highest, so that the water drains down equally in all directions. Round the field, and a foot lower, extends a strip of grass, three or four yards wide; still lower, a hedge of elders is planted, which is cut every seven years; and, finally, the plot is surrounded by a ditch, bordered with trees of larger growth. Thus, each piece furnishes rich grass, firewood every seven years, and timber for building every thirty years. The plough is generally used; but every seven years the subsoil is turned to the top by the spade, and thus it acquires a depth unknown to all but the best gardens; the principal object being to produce flax and butter, not cereals. The best farmers never sell their corn, but allow their cattle to consume it.

Unhappily, the farm-labourer there, as elsewhere, does not enjoy much comfort; working harder than most men, he is the worst fed. Rye-bread, potatoes, beans, buttermilk, without meat or bacon, is the usual fare, chicory the constant drink; beer is reserved for Sundays and fair-days. His wages vary from tenpence to a shilling, and he could never live upon it did not all the members of his family work without ceasing. When the day's work is ended, often by moonlight, the father cultivates his small field; his wife and daughters take up the poorly paid lace-work, instead of the old spinning-wheel, which steam has superseded; and his sons, when their field-work is done, bring up rabbits for the London market. Their little hands pick up every tuft of herbage on the roadside, and open up a large trade of exportation not to be despised. From Ostend alone there come to us one million two hundred thousand rabbits every year; these are skinned and cleaned in Belgium, where the skin is used for the making of hats. Yet, though their life is so hard, the towns do not attract the rural population. Habit and family traditions bind them to the plough; whilst every nine years, at the renewal of their lease, the raising of the rent fills them with anxiety, and poisons their existence. It makes them distrust all those who are making inquiry on the state of agriculture, and dissimulate as to the fertility of their land, and the produce they obtain from it.

Western Flanders is crossed by a strip of land which is particularly difficult of cultivation; until lately it was scarcely inhabited, and covered with low brushwood and marshy heath. The reindeer moss enveloped the trees with a layer as of white ashes; abundance of ferns and moss grew, and the sickly appearance of other plants gave the country a sterile appearance. But by means of the pine-tree this land has also become valuable. About thirty thousand young trees are planted on an acre; at the end of seven years, these are thinned, and sold for firewood; this is repeated every two years, until the trees are twenty years old, when they begin to cut them into poles for the hop; at twenty-five years, they produce props for mines; at thirty, wood for building; and at forty, the acre will still

have a thousand trees, worth three or four shillings each, the whole paying very fairly for the expenses.

A few families settle on the spot to carry on the work; they take a lease of a corner of land at a very low rent, and husband and wife set to work, and build a cabin which they can call their own. The next savings are spent on a goat and a few rabbits, then they bring up a calf on the grass which grows in the wood; when at last they possess a cow, they are saved from poverty. The milk is made into butter; the manure enriches their land; a little capital accumulates, and in a few years the labourer becomes a small farmer; by degrees the small population increases, the land is conquered by cultivation, the owner has spent little beside the wages. The labourer is assured of his plot for thirty years, and willingly spends his time upon it. Here, doubtless, under adverse circumstances, a living is made by a family; but what kind of living? Not what any ordinary English artisan, realising the comforts procurable by a wage of a pound to thirty shillings a week, would be inclined to put up with.

The two products which grow the best on poor land are rye and potatoes, and they form the food of most of the rural classes in Belgium. It has been remarked that the Germanic races have a predilection for rye, and it bears a better crop than wheat, whilst the straw is much used for roofing the cabins. Barley gives also a larger return than in England; and potatoes, though so uncertain, owing to the disease, are the favourite food of the Flemings; buckwheat is also a precious plant, because it requires little tillage; and when the potatoes fail at the end of July, it can be immediately sown, and coming up as the leaves die, stifles the weeds, and gives a good second crop. Flax is more cultivated than ever, as France and England buy all the finest quality ready spun. Each farmer also grows the tobacco for his own use; whilst near Commines and Wervicq it is cultivated on a large scale, and acquires a powerful flavour, much appreciated in America.

The hop is another variety of culture of which Belgium may be proud; the vine of the north hangs its beautiful dark-green verdure around the poles, but it only gives its perfumed cones in return for much money and continual labour. The land must be rich and provided with fir-poles, three thousand to the acre; as it grows, the stems have to be tied, and liquid manure given to those plants which shew yellow leaves; finally, at the time of harvest, numbers of work-people have to be gathered together for the picking. But whilst in England the whole of the ground is sacrificed to the hop, there are in Belgium the most splendid crops of wheat and beetroot growing between. Chicory, like the hop, is a very expensive article of culture; but it gives a rich return, estimated at forty pounds an acre. The produce of colza is also very valuable.

It will be seen that few sheep are fed in a country where there is so little pasture; horses of great strength, and milch cows which give much butter, and can be fed in the stable, are considered most advantageous, and statistics shew that more of these animals are fed on the acre than in any other country. It is to be remarked that the Flemish farmer has compensated for all the disadvantages of his soil and climate by a simple means within the reach of all—that of restoring to the land what it gives to the wants of man; the too much neglected

secret of agricultural chemistry. Belgium, in short, offers a pleasant spectacle of rural industry, but, from the circumstances mentioned, we do not believe that the same thing could be realised in the British Islands.

THE BEST OF HUSBANDS.

CHAPTER XVI.—MISS LINCH.

THE *fracas*, as the Hilton newspapers termed it, between John Milbank and Dennis Blake was settled out of court, as Mr Linch had foretold it would be; but that did not curb the gossips' tongues, which made very free with Maggie's name. She formed for some days the chief topic of conversation at the *Sans Souci* club, not only in the card and billiard rooms, but, I am sorry to say, among the more grave and reverend seigniors, who discussed the circumstances of the case 'with a world of coughing and noise,' engendered mostly by suppressed significance. The theories on the matter were very various—some even contending that Blake was Maggie's champion against the aspersions of Milbank; but almost all opinions were unfavourable to John. A man who could brick up a cellar with good wine in it, neither drinking it himself, nor permitting others to drink it, was not likely to receive much quarter in genial male society. Nor did he fare much better with the ladies; their keener instinct directed them nearer to the truth, but they did not spare him the more on that account; and, of course, they were capable of 'saying things' from which the masculine mind shrank appalled. Of all this, Herbert Thorne and his daughter knew nothing for many days; his condition kept him within doors, and Maggie staid at home to nurse him. They had read the account of the rencontre with Dennis in the paper, and afterwards, that the matter had been compromised, but they had heard nothing more; and they could not understand why John did not look in as usual.

The engraver endeavoured to explain it on the grounds of delicacy: this unfortunate quarrel had arisen on Maggie's behalf, and John might well conceive that his appearance would be painful to her; perhaps he even blamed himself for his part in it; though the printed accounts shewed he had acted under great provocation. Blake, drunk and dangerous, had insulted him in the street, and being mildly put aside by that quite resolute arm of his, had spoken daggers about Poulter's Alley, whereupon John had knocked him down, just once—and it must be confessed that the once had been enough. Denny had fallen to pieces beneath that 'shot from the shoulder' like a box of matches; it seemed as though John had been husbanding his strength, throughout his inoffensive lifetime, to deal that terrible blow.

It was a shocking catastrophe, no doubt, but Maggie secretly admired John for his part in it more than she had done for all his passive virtues, and this she would have done even had the girl he had thus championed been dead Alice Grey. Seeing it was herself, she experienced also a shock of tender gratitude. Certainly, as even her father said, it would be embarrassing for her to meet John; but she longed to thank him for his advocacy—though she blamed his haste and violence—and since she must see him sooner or later, it seemed foolish

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in him, though quite in accordance with his shy retiring ways, to keep aloof. As days, however, went on, and weeks, without his coming, she began to speculate whether he would come at all; and also to consider whether the mere fear of her displeasure was not the cause of his absence; and though her father forbore to discuss the matter with her, she saw, by the failure of his spirits, that he missed John's visits exceedingly, and, like herself, had begun to conclude that there would be no renewal of them. The improvement in his physical health was become much less marked, though his enforced idleness was borne with his usual patience. One afternoon there was a ring at the door-bell which startled them both, since visitors of any sort were very rare with them now.

'Thank Heaven, there is John at last,' cried the engraver.

Maggie did not reply, for she could not be so sure of John's ring as she had been of Richard's; and besides, now that the moment had come for the interview so long delayed, she half wished that it might yet be postponed: her pale cheeks flushed, and her heart beat high, as she listened for that slow, firm footfall on the stairs which had in itself something of the owner's character. Poor Richard used to bound up them three steps at a time.

It was, therefore, with almost a sense of relief that she heard a female voice in conference with the servant below, and her father exclaim peevishly: 'Why, it is that stupid, tedious woman, Martha Linch, after all.'

Martha Linch was a stupid, tedious woman, with a perennial flow of small-talk, that would have worn away the heart of any husband, though it were made of stone; but the maxim, that there is 'not stuff enough in a fool to make a good man,' does not somehow apply to woman. Miss Linch was an eminently good creature, and would have made the lawyer's home a happy one, had he only been deaf; as it was, he was away from it a good deal, on week-days working at the law; on Sunday, preaching the gospel—being, as Mr Roberts said, 'a professing Christian, but a practising attorney'; and not being Martha's husband, he passed the hours of the night in silence, which recruited him. It was only her tongue—at once a speaker and an 'unruly member'—that was in fault with her: her hand was ever ready to help her fellow-creatures, to smooth the pillow, and soothe the pain of the humblest. When the engraver had been taken ill, she had volunteered to assist Maggie in tending him, an offer which was declined with thanks, but peremptorily; but the rejection had not offended her. Nothing offended Martha Linch, except wickedness and vice, and such things as offend Heaven. But she never intruded where she was not welcome, and she knew that the engraver did not enjoy her society, so her visits in Mitchell Street were like those of angels. Once in six months, or so, this 'old belle with her clapper,' as coarse Matthew Thurlie had been wont to term her, was wont to call on the Thornes, and the present was one of her state visits.

Upon this occasion, the clapper seemed to be somewhat 'muffled,' nor had her words and manners the bird-like vivacity for which they were generally distinguished, as she flew from twig to twig of small-talk with untiring wing. Perhaps the

melancholy condition of the engraver restrained her; she saw at once that he was not yet able to be at work again, and her kind eyes glistened as they fell upon his disused tools. After a few words of genuine condolence with him, she addressed herself confidentially to Maggie.

'He is better though, is he not, dear?' whispered she; 'only, while the grass is growing, the steed starves, and it is so sad to be out of work. My dear brother has told me you seemed getting on quite comfortably, or else I should have called, of course; you would have sent to me, if you had wanted any help, I hope. Well, that shews the advantage of putting by against a rainy day. I am sure it does you both credit. To have managed to rub on, and hold your heads up, without borrowing, that is most satisfactory after all; though, between friends, what is a little money advanced. Obligation, indeed! That's rubbish.'

Maggie was growing very hot and uncomfortable, under these well-meant phrases, every one of which had a barb for her; when her father came to the rescue, by inquiring after John Milbank. Miss Linch immediately assumed an air of gloomy reserve, ill fitting, as a Spanish cloak thrown over a Highlander. 'He is tolerably well, I believe,' said she significantly; 'as well as can be expected, quite.'

'My good woman, what do you mean?' inquired the engraver, always impatient of poor Martha. 'That is a phrase I have never before heard applied to a person of the male sex.'

'Well, he's worried and troubled, of course. It was most injudicious of him to do what he did; and you never can stop people's tongues by knocking them down ever so often in the street; quite the contrary. My dear brother compares him to Cadmus, a gentleman about whom you probably know more than I. Every tooth that he knocked out of Mr Blake has sprung up an armed man against him.'

'I understand the metaphor,' observed the engraver dryly; 'but what I can not understand is, how a man like John Milbank can be put out of sorts by malicious tittle-tattle. Why should he shut himself up like a hermit, because fools speak ill of him?'

'He was never much of a man for going out into society,' suggested Miss Linch; 'and I believe he goes down to the office, and so on, much as usual.'

'He seems to have quite deserted his old friends, however,' remarked the engraver with irritation; 'and you may tell him that I said so, if you please.'

'O father!' interposed Maggie pleadingly.

'Well, really, you see it is such a very delicate matter. It is nobody's fault except the scandal-mongers, I know; but I don't quite see how John is to come here as usual; not on his own account, of course, Mr Thorne—in a man's case, nothing signifies—but out of delicacy to somebody else; and Miss Linch looked significantly at Maggie.

'What! because a drunken reprobate tells a vile story of an honest girl—a story, too, that turns out on investigation vastly to her credit—she is supposed, forsooth, to be unable to endure the sight of the man that has taken up the cudgels for her! Why, if he has any sense, he must be sure that a girl of spirit!'

'I entreat you to be silent, father!' exclaimed

Maggie earnestly. 'You are distressing me beyond all measure. It is plain enough that Miss Linch is aware of some other reason—and probably a good one—why John Milbank does not visit us. It seems to me that you would be greatly wanting in self-respect to send him any such message as you proposed a while ago.'

'Well, indeed, Mr Thorne, I couldn't take it,' observed Miss Linch demurely. 'I don't think it would be consistent with propriety to do so; I don't, indeed. It could only add to his unhappiness, and a more unhappy man than John, even as it is, I do not know. If I was wicked enough to believe in luck, I should say he was born without it. First to be half-ruined by his brother, and then to be blamed because his brother ran away; though nobody, I'm sure, laments his absence—his loss, one might almost call it, since, I suppose, he will never turn up again—more than John himself does. The difference in him, even then, as you must have seen with your own eyes, was sad enough: not a smile for anybody, and the colour all gone out of his cheeks, as from a cheap print in the wash; and now, because he has taken upon himself to chastise a wicked scoundrel for speaking ill of his brother's betrothed wife—though I am sure I am as glad that never came off, as any of her friends—to be accused of wanting to curry favour with her upon his own account; I say, he seems to me to be very hardly used indeed. Of course, it is an additional misfortune to be deprived of the society of such old friends as you and Maggie; but still, under the circumstances, how can he come? I think you must see that, Mr Thorne, yourself!'

'I do see it,' answered the engraver gravely. 'The fact is, Miss Linch, that Maggie and I have lived of late in such seclusion that we have not heard this gossip.'

'Dear me, I hope I have not been inconsiderate!' exclaimed Miss Linch in a flutter. 'I am the last person in the world to talk, myself, but I really thought that everybody was aware of what was said of John. It is perfectly shameful, in my opinion, and when the poor fellow is already half broken-hearted, and worn to a thread, for Richard's sake. I am sure such a man has need to have his reward in the next world.—Of course, it is not your fault, Miss Maggie, so you needn't take on about it' (Miss Maggie's 'taking on' was simply being perfectly silent; in Miss Linch's eyes, however, a circumstance of much significance); 'for, as I always say, not a syllable of encouragement has John Milbank, to my knowledge, ever had from you. It was only yesterday that I tried to comfort him, when he called at my dear brother's, with saying that. "Whatever the world may say, John," said I, "her conscience is as clear as yours, in that matter; she would as soon have thought of marrying the Pope of Rome." But he only groaned, in a miserable, hopeless sort of way, and went slowly out of the house, like one in a dream. Mrs Morden tells me that he's always like that, more or less; and it's her opinion—though it needn't go any farther—that John's brain is getting affected from sheer moping and solitude. His health is certainly breaking up. He has had the roses planted again that poor Richard cut down in his tantrums; but I doubt myself if he will ever live to see them blow. However, it is a great pleasure to me to find you getting better, Mr Thorne; and I hope you will soon

be able to come with Maggie, and take a dish of tea with us. A little change of scene will do her good too. But I've been chatting here long enough, and you're still an invalid, I must remember, and ought not to be excited.'

Then, in a torrent of farewells and promises to look in upon Maggie, and cheer her up, whenever she should feel the need of that stimulant, Martha Linch took her leave.

Father and daughter sat in silence for some minutes after her departure. The old man was dreadfully cast down. If what their visitor had said was true, as no doubt it was, there was indeed no hope of John Milbank's visiting Mitchell Street, far less of his making suit to Maggie. That he was really devoted to her, the engraver had no doubt. With some men in the like case, such rumours would only have urged them to prosecute their addresses, and learn their fate at once; but John was so diffident of himself, and so sensitive of the opinions of others, that it might well be, in his chivalrous carefulness for Maggie's reputation, that he might even die and make no sign that he had ever loved her. There was a lackadaisicalness and want of spirit in such a course of conduct, that at one time would have aroused Herbert Thorne's contempt; but a broken man, enfeebled by disease, and burdened with debt, cannot call contempt to his assistance; such a man has only anxiety for his ally—or, rather, for his unsought companion, and well for him when it is not exchanged for mortification and disappointment. It was so exchanged now in Thorne's case. He had hoped to live to see his only daughter married to a good and thriving man; but that union was out of the question: the delicate and beautiful flower that seemed formed to adorn a home, was to be put to far other uses. If health and strength should continue to be denied him—and they seemed just now to be gone from him for ever—she was doomed to be his nurse, and drudge, and scanty bread-winner, till death should relieve her of a useless father; and then she would be quite alone, without a friend! He bent his head over the work that ever and anon he still took up, in hopes to find that the virtue that disease had stolen had returned to his right hand, and for the first time there fell a tear on the shining metal, that turned to disregarded rust.

'Father, dear, I am going out,' said Maggie presently: 'I shall be a little longer away than usual.'

'As you please, my darling—as you please,' he murmured with averted face.

It was her habit at five o'clock to leave him to visit the child in Poulter's Alley, who had been the innocent cause of all this trouble. He had never objected to her doing so; it was a protest against that ruffian scandal, and besides, he knew that it gave her comfort, and that she sorely needed it: but to-day he grudged her absence on that errand. What a curse had this Richard Milbank been to him and his; and what a legacy of woe had he left behind him! It would be hard enough for Maggie to get bread for their own mouths, and yet, for the future, it seemed she must support this fellow's unacknowledged offspring.

How complacently do we talk of the condition of the poor; yet what a burden to them is that which lies upon us like a feather's weight; how what we set aside as a paltry consideration, not to

be reckoned in our load of cares, bows them to the very earth, who have their cares besides!

When Maggie, however, left Mitchell Street that afternoon, it was not to Poulter's Alley that she turned her steps; she took a road she had not travelled for many a day—that which led to Rosebank.

CHAPTER XVII.—‘I WILL, JOHN.’

Maggie had not visited Rosebank since her father had been taken ill; the last time she had done so, the bitter knowledge of her lover's faithlessness had been thrust upon her, and all her scheme of life been shattered at a blow. But at that time there had been a hope of Richard's return to Hilton. She had gone to his house, though she did not enter it, to ask as usual for news of him. It had not been certain, as it was now, that he was either dead, or had forsaken her. A few months only had since passed over her head, but the change they had wrought in her was such as years of ordinary experience would have failed to effect. Her hair was glossy and plentiful and raven black as ever; her form, though slighter than it had been, was still graceful and shapely; but within, youth seemed to have fled from her altogether. She had heard with wonder on the previous Sunday, when she had gone to church for the first time for many weeks, the clergyman discourse upon the vanities of life, and of how men cling to them. He had used the old arguments she had heard a score of times before, and which had hitherto appeared to her sufficiently reasonable. ‘The pride of life’ had dwelt in her once, no doubt; she had taken pleasure in her own beauty, and delighted in the admiration which it had excited in another. Life had seemed pleasant enough, and hard to leave. But now, for her, it was emptied of all its sweetness. She put that question to herself which most men put (but not until they have attained to twice her age), and which few can answer satisfactorily to themselves: ‘What have I now to live for?’ The man of self-denial and good deeds may reply: ‘I live for Heaven.’ The man of pleasure may still hope to derive gratification from the old sources, though they are drawing near the dregs, and he is conscious that such joys are beginning to pall upon him; but with the majority of those of middle age who sit and hear that trite description of the lures and attractions of life, it has lost all meaning. It is as though the preacher should take you to a theatre by daylight, and expatiate upon the splendours of the transformation scene, and the beauty of the young persons who in the evening will be fairies. ‘It is no wonder,’ says he, ‘that you are dazzled by the magnificence of this spectacle, and intoxicated with the charms of these ladies.’ But indeed we are not dazzled, and we are not intoxicated; we are sick of going to the play, and tired of the stage altogether—the whole weary stage of life. As to mere pleasure, it has lost its charm; and as to work, we have by this time found out our measure. What we have done, indeed, we may do again, but probably not so well, and certainly not so much to our own satisfaction. There is nothing more to be hoped for that has not already been vouchsafed to us, unless, indeed, our aspirations are very mean indeed. We may heap up money, we may mix in higher society than we do at present; but if these are our hopes of happiness, we have travelled

along life's road so long to little purpose indeed, or we must be of a disposition exceptionally sanguine. True, it is always well to work; necessary to provide for our families; and obviously wicked and cowardly to cut short the thread of our own existence; but to hold up the picture of life's attractions to us as idle as to exhibit the sign of some hotel where we have ourselves already sojourned, and drank all the best of the wine, and eaten the pick of the meat, and where nothing is left, we know, but indifferent liquor and cold shoulders.

Maggie Thorne had attained to this knowledge twenty years before her time, but she had attained to it. There was her father to live for, and to work for; there was Richard's child to be supported; but as for any pleasurable expectation—far less the gracious gift we call Hope—to be looked forward to in the days to come, it existed for her nowhere. The ‘crown of sorrows’ alone remained to her, of remembering happier days. There had been a time when the very sight of Rosebank had quickened her pulses, and brought the colour to her cheek; when the clang of its gate-bell had been music; when the scent of its flowers, as she passed through the garden, had filled her soul with ecstasy. She had wondered in her humility how everything that had then occurred to her there seemed to add to the great sum of her happiness.

She had come thither now upon an embarrassing errand, and yet she did not feel ill at ease; her misery had at least the advantage of making her indifferent and self-possessed. When the girl, in answer to her summons, informed her that John was not within, but was expected every moment, she did not, as when Martha Lynch had appeared that day instead of him at home, feel any sense of relief, of a reprieve. The associations of the place stirred her too much for that. Observing calmly that she would wait for Mr Milbank, she moved slowly towards the house, her eyes roving over each well-remembered spot. Here, beneath the southern wall, Richard, when a boy, had had a plot of garden of his own—very ill tilled—but in which grew a peach-tree, the fruit of which had always been reserved for her. In that gardener's house, where the tools were kept, and the wood was piled for winter use, she had hidden from him at ‘Hide-and-Seek.’ In that arbour they had sat together, while she had read to him, and he had loved to listen, not to the words, but to the voice which spoke them!

All this had happened years ago, of course, yet it seemed but yesterday. There were later memories, dearer yet, from which she shrank. Here he had plucked a rose, and given it to her with words more sweet than its fragrance. The flower was dead—in a drawer of her desk at home, but not more dead to her than he who had given it. On this very spot, behind the angle of the house, he had turned to kiss her, while her father and the rest, after an evening spent with the brothers, had gone on towards the gate. O perjured lips, that were used to press another's cheek so fondly, to whisper into another's ear the self-same vows!

With quickened step, she moved on to the door, where Mrs Morden stood and welcomed her affectionately. This was a surprise, indeed, she said; Maggie's pretty face, which had become quite strange to her, did her good to look at. It

would do Mr John good, she was sure, and sore he needed it. What had come to him, for her part, she could not tell. 'He takes no food to speak of; and drink, as you know, Miss Maggie, he never did take. And it's the same with his sleep, for he sits up half the night, walking to and fro like a ghost; and yet, in the morning, he is the first to be up and about.'

'I noticed that he was looking far from well,' said Maggie sympathisingly, 'when he called last.'

'Last!' echoed the old lady (whose deafness her visitor had for the moment forgotten), catching only that final word: 'why, of course it's impossible that he should last if he goes on like that! It has been worse than ever with him during the last fortnight. I have sometimes made bold to advise him to go down and pass an evening with Mr Thorne and yourself, for not a soul ever comes to see him. I'll go and get ready a dish of tea for both of you, over which you may be more neighbourly-like and natural: there's nothing like tea to foster pleasant talk.'

It was a great relief to Maggie when the garrulous old woman left her alone in the little parlour, full though it was of melancholy associations, for when the heart is sad, solitude is preferable to any sympathy which is not exactly tuned to the same chord of woe. In that very room, while his uncle was still on tolerable terms with him, Richard had declared his love, on just such a spring evening as the present: the old man was above-stairs; John, as now, had not yet returned from the office; one glass door was open, and one closed; the time was exactly the same as she now read it to be on the same clock-face. So long as she lived, she would never forget that time and scene, with every circumstance that environed them. If the accessories had not been present still, she could have recalled them with the exactest minuteness; but scarcely anything was changed. Upon the mantel-shelf were the two bronze vases, filled with Indian grasses, that had satisfied old Matthew Thurle's views of internal decoration, notwithstanding that a thousand roses bloomed about his door; on the walls, hung a faithful picture of the factory in which he had passed his busiest and happiest days; and opposite, was a drawing of the little establishment, half-shop, half-shed, which had been all he owned in early days. It had been his practice to contrast one with the other, and boast to every visitor, in his frank, unvarnished way, of the small beginnings of his greatness. On the walls, too, hung the portraits of his nephews, at the period when they had been admitted to the high distinction of taking part in the business of the firm, each a mere boy, whose school-days had been cut short for that very purpose. How very, very beautiful was that bright face, which even the cheap limner could not spoil! How round his brow clustered the soft brown curls which she had played with many and many a time, and one of which—long afterwards—he had given her to mingle with her own, in sign—

With a sharp pain, she turned her eyes from that fair sight, and fixed them on the portrait of his brother. That was fair too; a man would have said, more fair; more earnest and more honest, and not less comely. There was not so much sparkle in the eye; no winning smile played on the lip; no arch expression, such as proclaims the boy of spirit, shone from the canvas. Yet there was something better

than mere resolve and plodding in that thoughtful face; if it lacked assurance, it had confidence enough; in the eyes dwelt truth, and the courage to speak it.

'Ten years have changed all that, Maggie,' said a quiet voice, and by her side stood the original of the portrait, smiling sadly down upon her.

'Why, John, how you frightened me!' cried she. She spoke the truth, for so deep had she been in thought that she had heard no sign of his approach, and was really startled by it; but her alarm was far greater now, when the suddenness of the shock had passed away, and she had time to scan his face. She had been prepared, from what the housekeeper had said, to see alteration in it, but not for what she saw. His large blue eyes looked forth from two dark caverns; his cheeks had fallen in; his chin was sharpened as her father's had been when the doctor looked most grave; the delicate complexion alone remained, which had been the subject of jest from his boyhood, and was intensified. He looked more 'angelic'—as some had called him, not without reason—than she had ever seen him, and nearer to death and heaven. 'What is the matter, John?' asked she, with tender earnestness. She was very sorry to see him thus. If he were to die, it struck her, for the first time, that with her sorrow would mingle a sharp sense of ingratitude, of unacknowledgment, not of favours, but of devotion.

'Nothing is the matter, Maggie, thank you.'

'But you look so ill, John—so very, very ill.'

'I am well enough,' he said. The tone was that in which the sick man who knows better than the doctor, says: 'As well as I ever shall be.'

'You cannot be well, John, else you would have come and seen us, surely, all this time. We—that is, my father has been sorely grieved about it.'

'He sent you here, then, did he?' asked John slowly, the smile fading from his lip, and leaving his face as white and colourless as a lamp from which the light has died away.

'No! I came hither unknown to him; to ask after you, and—and, also, John, to thank you for very much. For having got into trouble on my account, for one thing.' Her cheek was scarlet, but she held her head up, and looked earnestly upon him; while he, on the other hand, looked down distressed. 'It is a very painful thing for me to speak of, and for you to listen to, John, but I must thank my champion. Let others blame you for your haste and anger. I take this hand, that struck a scoundrel down for flinging shame upon an honest girl, and kiss it.'

It was perhaps a generous impulse that prompted her, or perhaps she found it easier to do anything rather than speak upon such a subject; but the action—though she did but raise his fingers to her lips, and then dismiss them—affected him strangely. His wan cheeks flushed for an instant, and his eyes kindled with excitement; then his face grew blank again. 'O Maggie!' cried he, as though in pain, 'that is great payment for small service.'

'The service was great, John,' answered she gravely, 'and will never be forgotten. And there are other things for which I have to thank you: the loan to my father, and—and this bracelet.' She drew from her bosom a little jewel-case, and laid it on the table.

'It was among the rest of the debts,' said he slowly. 'I thought the jeweller ought to be paid, since he complained of its being thrown upon his hands.'

'You are always just and kind, John; but this does not belong to me, nor can I accept it. It was never Richard's to give; and if it had been—I mean, if it were now'—her voice grew faint and low, and her words incoherent—'that is all over and gone for ever!'

He did not speak, nor even look at her, but stood silent, waiting for her to recover herself, and playing nervously on the table with his hand.

'I meant to give it you back,' resumed she presently, 'knowing well from whom it came, and why; but you did not give me the opportunity. It seemed to me that you never intended to come and see us again; that you would content yourself for the future with doing us good, by stealth if possible, and that we should be friends—in any true sense—no more. That is hard on us, John.'

'Hard on you!' repeated the other, with a hollow laugh. 'I hard on you!'

'Yes; hard on me, and very hard on my father. He wants a friend, and not only an almoner. I do not ask you why you never visit us now, because I know the reason. I was told to-day, for the first time, what people are saying about—about you and me.'

'She knows it!' murmured John, with inexpressible melancholy. 'I felt she did.'

'Yes; I know it. But I don't know why you should despise the slanders that are uttered against others, and yet take those to heart which concern yourself.'

'They are not slanders, Maggie!' cried he desperately. 'What they say is true.'

'True!' echoed she indignantly. 'What! that you rejoiced in Richard's departure, because it left "the coast clear"—that is the term they use—and freed you from a rival? If you were to tell me that you were so base as that, with your own lips, I would not credit it. No, John; if I know your heart, you would give half you have—half Richard's waste has left you—to see him once more alive and well here.'

'I would give all,' was the solemn, earnest, answer.

'I knew it! And when they say that you are kind to us, nay, kind to *him*—here she pointed to the bracelet—and have stripped yourself of means to clear his memory from shame, and all in hopes to supplant him with her who was once betrothed to him, I know that is false too.'

'To "supplant" him, and "in hopes"?' answered John, looking quickly up at her for the first time, and speaking with intense excitement. 'Yes; that is false. I have loved you, Maggie, all my life; I could not help it; I shall love you till I die!—Nay, since you have made me speak, you must hear me out. I say, when once Richard had won you, I tried to think of you but as my sister. I did my best to make you so. It was in my power to have hindered Richard's marriage, from lack of means, and I enriched him. I look back upon the past—that past, at least—and find nothing to reproach myself with—nothing! It is a lie to say that I ever strove to supplant him; and even after he—left Hilton, you can witness for me that I never spoke one word to you of more than kindness. Hopes! You little know! I

never had a hope, until this day, this hour! You said just now, that if—if he were still alive!—'

'Still alive!' echoed Maggie, trembling excessively. 'What makes you think him dead?'

'I thought you thought him so, because you said: "That is all over and gone for ever." It seemed to me that you would never have given him up whatever happened.'

'You were wrong, John. If he returned to-morrow, we should be strangers. There are some things a woman can forgive, but never forget. I could not be his friend even. Richard and I have shaken hands for the last time.'

'Then let me speak to you of *my* love, Maggie!' exclaimed the young man passionately. 'I do not supplant him now. I would never have wronged him, but for those words of yours, even by so much as to say "Pity me." I should have died, and you would never have known. I had made up my mind to that; and now, you have only to say "No," and you shall never hear me speak of love again.—Supplant him! here he drew himself up, as though replying to some imaginary accuser. 'Neither present nor absent, neither living nor dead, has he been supplanted! You yourself tell me your heart is vacant, Maggie; oh! has it not a little, little space for me?'

He could plead for himself, this man, it seemed, after all; nothing could exceed the pathos and earnestness of his tones; and yet his manner, though eager, was forced, and that confidence was altogether lacking which makes half the eloquence of a lover's prayer.

Maggie looked at him, not coldly, indeed, for her face was full of tender pity, but with infinite regret.

'It wounds me to the quick, John, to give you the answer which I yet perceive you to expect. My love is lost with Richard, or buried with him. I have it not to give even to you, whom I respect and admire above all men. My heart is not vacant, as you termed it, but withered. It has loved once, whether worthily or unworthily, it matters not, and can never love again, any more than a dead tree can put forth leaves.'

'You mistake me, Maggie,' answered John, with a calm that bespoke the depth of the passion beneath it: 'I am not so hopeless as you imagine. Since I have borne so long to see you love another, I can bear to see you without love at all. I can bear to marry you so, Maggie, and be thankful. Listen a moment, before you say "No" again, for it will be the last word you will ever speak to me. I really do not mean, dear, to threaten you!—it is no threat at all. I shall live for months, for years perhaps, but not here. This lonely place, the very town itself, has become intolerable to me, and I shall leave it. You may be sure that your father shall not have cause to miss me, at least in a material way. I am not bidding for you, Maggie. What is mine will be yours, whether you consent to be mine or not. I have no other object to live for but your comfort: I never had.'

'O John, John!' cried Maggie, 'if I had all to offer you that a good man has a right to expect in her he weds, I should not be worthy of you; but as it is, how can I?—'

'Worthy of me!' interrupted he, with bitterness. 'Don't talk like that, Maggie. You don't know what you are talking about. I am worthy of no

woman's love, far less of yours. I'— Here he stopped suddenly, and leaning on the table, rocked himself from side to side. His agitation was terrible to witness, and smote Maggie to the heart.

'I should say, John, that that was mock humility, if one of the best of men had not once called himself "the chief of sinners,"' said she. 'I know you are no hypocrite; you would never play a false part, though it were to gain the world.'

'I don't know about "the world," Maggie; but I think I would do anything, fair or foul, to possess you. Please to give me my answer, for every moment that I look at you, and hear your voice, will make my doom the harder. Dear girl, be merciful,' cried he, with piteous passion. 'You touched my hand just now with your sweet lips—why, that was more to me than warmest kiss from her he loved would have been to another man! I do not look for love, though love will come. It must, it must! Give me the chance to win it! Or even if that be hopeless, call me yours, and let me call you mine! O Maggie, will you be my wife!'

'I will, John!'

They were plain passionless words enough, and though a smile went with them, it was the smile that gilds the favour granted to importunity, rather than that which should accompany a maiden's 'Yes.' But the effect on John was electrical. His face lit up with joy; his very limbs, which, as though weighed down by despondency and lack of hope, had hung loose and listless, seemed suddenly to acquire strength and vigour; for a single instant, all his lost youth and beauty seemed to revisit him, as he seized Maggie's hand and covered it with kisses. She had crowned his wretched life with those unhopd-for words, as King Cophetua crowned the beggar maid; and his love was still very humble.

Poor Maggie was thankful that it was so; but she could not help contrasting her new lover's modest triumph in his success with Richard's raptures on a like occasion. The recollection gave her a momentary pang; but she did not repent of having yielded to John's appeal. By so doing, she had secured the happiness of the two beings whom she revered most in the world, John Milbank and her father; and it had been said that our own happiness is always found in seeking that of other people. There was one thing only that troubled her—a very foolish trouble, since it was certain that the matter would be arranged according to her own wishes; but she regretted that she had not made a stipulation that she should be permitted to adopt the child in Poulter's Alley. She could hardly make it now, far less give her reasons for desiring it; which were, that when married to John, she might have something to love—in Richard's son.

The successful wooer must have had his trouble too, for long after Maggie had departed from Rosebank—her promise given that she would become its mistress in a few weeks—he paced the little parlour with restless tread; at supper-time the untasted food remained upon his fork, while he sat back in his chair, and, wrapt in thought, stared blankly at the wall; and once, but this was far into the night, he threw himself upon his knees, and clasped his hands, but the next moment, with a pitiful despairing cry, rose up again, to pace the room once more till morning came.

WASTEFUL DESTRUCTION OF BUFFALOES.

SOME years ago we used to hear of vast numbers of sheep being slaughtered in Australia, and boiled down for the sake of their fat. The meat was thrown away. It always struck us as a cruel and wasteful thing to kill so many animals in order to fill barrels with tallow. The preparation of meat for export in air-tight tins, has seemingly put an end to this wastefulness of food. While matters are so far improving in Australia, intelligence arrives of a destruction of animal food in America, which, if anything, goes beyond all that has been previously heard of. We refer to the hunting and killing of buffaloes wholesale, for the mere sake of their skins, the value of which on the spot is said to be very trifling. It has long been known that the practice was carried on to some extent in parts of South America. Now it is pursued with relentless ardour in the United States. On this subject we copy the following from a late number of *Nature*, and leave it to make its own impression: 'The enormous extent of the destruction of buffaloes on the western plains of the United States seems to have undergone no diminution during the present winter, and there is every reason to fear that, should this continue a few years longer, the animal will become as scarce as is its European congener at the present day. At present, thousands of buffaloes are slaughtered, every day, for their hides alone, which, however, have glutted the market to such an extent, that, whereas, a few years ago, they were worth three dollars apiece at the railroad stations, skins of bulls now bring but one dollar, and those of cows and calves sixty and forty cents, respectively. A recent short surveying expedition in Kansas led to the discovery of the fact that, on the south fork of the Republican, upon one spot, were to be counted six thousand five hundred carcasses of buffaloes, from which the hides only had been stripped. The meat was not touched, but left to rot on the plains. At a short distance hundreds more of carcasses were discovered, and, in fact, the whole plains were dotted with putrefying remains of buffaloes. It was estimated that there were at least two thousand hunters encamped along the plains, hunting the buffalo. One party of sixteen stated that they had killed twenty-eight hundred during the past summer, the hides only being utilised.'

A P R I L.

APRIL! thou hast a star upon thy brow,
A star of glory, splendor than those
That grace thy circlet from the primal rose,
Or meadow daisy, or the leafing bough,
Or sportive young of fruitful ewe or cow,
Or gentle wind, or shower, or sky that glows
With sapphire hue, or birds whose music flows
Melodiously from every branchlet. Thou
Wast the auspicious month of Shakspeare's birth,
The horizon line from which his splendid mind
Rose upward to illuminate the earth,
And sequent generations of mankind,
With that full brilliance of consummate song
Which holds the world in one still, listening throng.

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